

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims as set forth below.

1. - 10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently amended) A microwave plasma sterilizing device ~~according to claim 10~~ comprising: a microwave generator for outputting pulsed microwaves and a vacuum chamber with a gas inlet, outlet for pump and opening and closing plates, wherein the microwave inlet for introducing microwave and a microwave launcher of a sandwiched structure where a quartz plate for generating volume-wave plasma is sandwiched by a stainless steel perforated plate are arranged on one side in said vacuum chamber, and a movable metal plate is arranged opposite to said microwave launcher on the other side in said vacuum chamber, wherein said movable metal plate is connected to an elevating means to allow positional adjustment and wherein an object being sterilized is placed between said microwave launcher and said movable metal plate.

12. (New) A microwave plasma sterilizing method implemented by the microwave plasma sterilizing device according to claim 11, wherein the plasma is generated inside the object being sterilized by microwave-excited volume-wave plasma discharge in gas that produces an active species with a sterilization effect in the presence of plasma and said generated plasma is used for sterilizing the object.

13. (New) The microwave plasma sterilizing method according to claim 12 wherein said gas that produces an active species with a sterilization effect in the presence of plasma is oxygen gas.

14. (New) The microwave plasma sterilizing method according to claim 12 wherein said gas that produces an active species with a sterilization effect in the presence of plasma is a mixture of helium gas and oxygen gas.

15. (New) The microwave plasma sterilizing method according to claim 12 wherein said gas that produces an active species with a sterilization effect in the presence of plasma is a mixture of argon gas and oxygen gas.

16. (New) The microwave plasma sterilizing method according to claim 12 wherein said gas that produces an active species with a sterilization effect in the presence of plasma is a mixture of oxygen gas and nitrogen gas.

17. (New) The microwave plasma sterilizing method according to claim 16 wherein said mixture of oxygen gas and nitrogen gas consists of 1 part oxygen and 4 parts nitrogen gas.

18. (New) The microwave plasma sterilizing method according to claim 12 wherein said sterilizing object is an object packed in a perforated resinous package.

19. (New) The microwave plasma sterilizing method according to claim 12 wherein said sterilizing object is a medical instrument packed in a perforated plastic package.

20. (New) The microwave plasma sterilizing method according to claim 12 wherein said volume-wave plasma discharged in said gases is excited by pulsed microwaves.